

Tenant Advisory Group Annual Report 2018 / 2019



West of
Scotland
Housing
Association



Welcome

Welcome to the second annual report of the Tenant Advisory Group. We hope that you find it informative and interesting, and that you can see some of the work we have been doing representing all West of Scotland Housing Association tenants. We would like to start by thanking all the tenants who have been involved in any way over the past year, whether by responding to our surveys, or by attending meetings.

We have had a busy year, as we worked with WSHA to improve how they engage with tenants, how they gather views from tenants, and how they act on the views of tenants. We think that we have achieved a number of good outcomes for tenants, especially in relation to our work around 'tenant scrutiny'. We had a number of sessions with the Board, and delivered a presentation to the whole staff team at the WSHA. We have a busy agenda for the year ahead, and will provide regular updates about our work in Westworld and on WSHA's website.

The Tenant Advisory Group is always looking for new members, so if after reading our Annual Report you want to get involved then please get in touch.

Enjoy our report.

Tenant Advisory Group members

What is TAG (Tenant Advisory Group)?

TAG is the main way to engage and involve tenants in the operation of West of Scotland Housing Association. TAG is responsible for overseeing and scrutinising the performance of WSHA in how they deliver services to tenants, and reporting findings and recommendations to Board. The Group also has a role in agreeing the WSHA Tenant Report on the Charter – which sets out how the WSHA has performed against the Scottish Social Housing Charter. TAG also has a role in overseeing the development of our approach to tenant engagement and supporting the development of new initiatives and approaches.

TAG is also the body that oversees the approach that WSHA takes when reviewing policies and procedures that impact on tenants. TAG will agree the approach for each review, and where required oversee specific working groups.

TAG generally meets every two months, in the WSHA office in Glasgow.



Achievements throughout the year

Tenant Scrutiny

We have worked hard to develop our approach to tenant scrutiny in the last year, and have undertaken two scrutiny activities, and presented our findings to both management and the Board. The first activity related to how tenants contact WSHA and involved a mystery shopping exercise. The second activity was a review of the Grounds Maintenance service. For each activity we reviewed complaints, undertook a survey of both staff and tenants, looked at the approach undertaken by our landlords, and reviewed the existing policies. We are pleased to say that the recommendations we made were accepted by WSHA and we have developed a Progress Tracking Tool so that we can be updated when recommendations are implemented. Finally we agreed a Scrutiny Framework which sets out how the Group will work, and how we will interact with our stakeholders. You can read our Scrutiny reports, including recommendations on WSHA's website – www.westscot.co.uk

Policy Reviews

This year we provided feedback to WSHA about two different policies. WSHA reviewed its Anti-Social Behaviour Policy to take account of changes in legislation, and we were able to provide comments on how they tackle ASB, and how they keep those who complain informed. We also provided feedback on the Rent Arrears Policy, especially in relation to how WSHA works with vulnerable tenants who fall into difficulty.

Asset Management	<p>We received a presentation from WSHA about their approach to asset management. We asked questions about how often they undertake improvements to their homes, and how they budget for this work. Following this meeting WSHA developed an Asset Management Strategy which provides further information about their approach.</p>
Good Neighbour Charter	<p>We worked with WSHA to develop a charter that sets out how a ‘good neighbour’ would act. We made clear to WSHA that as well as setting out what tenants should do to fulfil the obligations of their tenancy agreement, the charter should also set out the kinds of actions that people could do to help support other people in their communities. You can read the Charter on the WSHA’s website.</p>
Customer Service Charter	<p>Following the findings from the tenant scrutiny activity we worked with WSHA to review the Customer Service Charter. We agreed on changes relating to timescales for responses, and how WSHA interacts with tenants who contact them via social media. You can read the revised charter on WSHA’s website.</p>
Tenant Engagement Strategy	<p>We continued to monitor the progress that the WSHA was making with regards to implementing this strategy. We received regular updates throughout the year and also attended a session with the Board to update them on progress. We also received regular updates about how WSHA was performing in a number of key service areas, and where performance was below target, we asked for Management to explain these reasons and outline the steps they would be taking to improve performance.</p>

Rent Consultation

We agreed with WSHA how they would gather feedback from tenants about their rent proposals. We asked that they produce a briefing paper to be sent to all tenants, that they outlined tenants to complete a survey, and that they tried to gather views of tenants via social media. Thanks to all those who got involved in this.

Rate Your Estate

We undertook a stock tour, so that we could see the conditions of the homes some of you live in. We visited the new developments in Troon and Symington, and were really impressed with the quality of homes WSHA is building. We visited some other areas where the condition of the homes was not quite so good, especially some of the older homes owned by WSHA. We fed this back to them and asked that they consider what improvements could be made. We also undertook a number of inspections of estates where WSHA has homes, and again provided feedback to them.

Challenges

The year for TAG has not been without some challenges, and as much as we have strengthened our relationship with management and staff at WSHA, there were some areas where we disagreed with decisions taken by them. We disagreed with the decision to remove the £10 gift for pensioners at Christmas time, and made our objections known. We also did not feel that WSHA had made the case for the rent increase that was applied, and again raised objections. We are working with WSHA to put in place measures that take on board learning from these issues raised e.g. the rent consultation requires to be done earlier in the rent setting process.

The group faced other challenges in terms of getting more tenants involved and encouraging more tenants to respond to consultations, and we will look to work on this in the year ahead as shown below in the priority areas of work for 2019/20.

Priorities for 2019/20

In 2019/20 we will continue to work with WSHA to improve the services that are delivered to tenants. The key priorities for the year ahead include:

Tenant Scrutiny – we want to continue our work in this area in the year ahead, undertaking a further two activities looking at different aspects of the services provided by WSHA. We will build on the good work undertaken in 2018/19, and look to build on our existing membership. We will also continue to monitor the progress WSHA makes with implementing our recommendations from last year.

Rent consultation – As noted above TAG was disappointed with the decision made in terms of the rent increase. This year we will work with WSHA to ensure that as many tenants as possible have the opportunity to respond to any proposals. We will therefore work with WSHA to ensure the consultation is held earlier in the year, and that tenants are presented with proposals that are clear, and easy to explain.

Involving younger tenants – a priority in our Tenant Engagement Strategy is to involve younger tenants in our work. We will work with WSHA to identify options for involving younger tenants, in a way that suits them.

Readers Panel – we want to allow all tenants to have the opportunity to be involved with the Association whether they have the ability to attend meetings or not. Therefore we will work with WSHA to develop opportunities for tenants to get involved at home, by introducing a ‘readers panel’ which will allow tenants to feedback on publications that we are planning to send out.

Groups in different communities – we want all tenants to have the opportunity to get involved with WSHA, and will look to work with tenants in different communities to identify the best methods for gathering their views.

A Big Thanks!

We'd like to thank all of you who have given time over the past year to support our work whether by attending meetings and events, or by completing surveys that formed part of our activities.

We are really keen to grow the membership of TAG and to increase our representation from all the communities that WSHA serves. If you are interested in getting involved do please get in touch with WSHA.

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